

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO



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NEWS RELEASE

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Councilmember Atkins Helps Open North Park Playground Breaks Ground On Pershing Portal Project

SAN DIEGO—Third District Councilmember Toni Atkins joined with community members Saturday to officially open the new \$1.6 million North Park Tot Lot Project at North Park Community Park. The project is unique in that it integrates educational and public art features into the design of the playground and its equipment.

"This playground is the culmination of years of design work, community input and countless meetings with city staff. I couldn't be more pleased with the final product—the art and education features are outstanding," said Councilmember Toni Atkins. "Providing increased park space and recreational opportunities for our Mid-City youth continues to be a top priority for me, so opening this playground is especially gratifying."

Conceived by ONA Inc. Landscape Architects and North Park's own Stone Paper Scissors, the North Park Tot Lot Project is believed to be the first playground in the city designed by artists who specialize in public art. The playground was built by Heffler Construction, Inc.

"I invite the community to come out and experience this one-of-a-kind playground. Both children and their parents alike will be surprised and excited by what the artists and architects have put together to take play time to a new level," said Atkins. "With such a large school-age population, North Park deserves a top-notch playground for its youth, and I believe we've been able to accomplish this here."

The playground includes a large, climbable, frog that makes and identifies 19 different sounds of various species of frogs, and offers a refreshing mist of water from its mouth. The frog theme is incorporated throughout the park, which has a variety of activities, including a station where pulleys can be used to draw up sand to activate a sand-driven pinwheel, a map of the solar system imprinted on the sidewalk with constellations that children can easily identify, as well as a large sand area, and benches and play areas under many of the features. The frog doubles as a time capsule containing the wishes of neighborhood children.

North Park Community Park, which comes under the jurisdiction of the North Park Recreation Council,

is located on Idaho Street between Lincoln and Howard avenues.

Later that morning, Atkins and many who attended the park opening took a short half-mile ride to join with other community members to break ground on the Pershing Portal Project. Located at the intersection of Pershing Drive, 28th Street and Upas Street, the

Pershing Portal Project is a public art and pedestrian entryway into the greater North Park community and the five-block area known as the David O. Dryden Historic District, known for the 16 unique one-story Craftsmen bungalows and two-story houses build by contractor David Owen Dryden between 1911 and 1919.

"Today we've seen the completion of one dream with the opening of the North Park Community Park playground, and now we witness the beginning of the final phase of another neighborhood dream, the Pershing Portal Project," said Atkins. "This project represents the collective consciousness of an entire neighborhood, and brings together the past and present in a stunning design that will serve as a signature gateway into this historic community."

The entry plaza at 28th Street will permanently close the street to through traffic, and for the first time will provide a continuous curb line along Upas Street from west to east. The landscaped plaza will be at the same level as the existing sidewalk, and will include both stamped and color sidewalks and plaques commemorating David Dryden and his wife, Isabel Rockwood Dryden. Concrete towers 7.5 feet high with copper roofs will mark the entry, and a quote from the late, esteemed historian and longtime North Park resident Don Covington will be stamped into the pavement between the entry towers.

The project had its genesis in the late 1980s when North Park residents, including Phyliss and Tom Shess and Don and Karon Covington, sought to close off 28th Street to through traffic. After compiling traffic records and with the support of surrounding neighbors, the street was closed off in 1993. Shortly thereafter, the Pershing Portal Project was conceived, and funding for it has been pieced together over the past 10 years. Local residents will provide funding for temporary maintenance and irrigation of the project until it can be included in a permanent Maintenance Assessment District.

"I really must commend the hard work and dedication of the handful of neighborhood members who saw this project through from the beginning who never let go of the vision and got us to this point," said Atkins. "I'm really excited for them, and for the entire community."

The project is expected to be completed by early 2004.

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